

heard that from a number of my Democratic colleagues who were quick to say they don't support him for other reasons, but they don't question his legal experience and his qualifications. You really can't.

The American Bar Association, not known for being very friendly to Conservatives, has given Brett Kavanaugh its highest rating unanimously. I know that in more than 20 hours of testimony before the Judiciary Committee—in fact, I think it was 32 hours of testimony—he showed an encyclopedic knowledge of the Constitution, of Supreme Court cases, an appreciation for Supreme Court precedent, and, overall, has an impressive grasp of the law.

Only a couple of weeks ago, he had successfully navigated the arduous process of meetings, interviews, and tough questions during 32 hours in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee. As a result, he had the votes in the committee, and he seemed to be headed toward confirmation here on the floor of the Senate. After 12 weeks of consideration and 5 days of hearings—by the way, more days of consideration and more days of hearings than we have had for any confirmation of any judge for the Supreme Court in recent history—the committee was ready to vote. Just before the vote in committee came the allegations of sexual assault and calls for delay.

As wrong as it was for Members of the U.S. Senate to have kept the allegations of Dr. Ford's secret until after the normal process had been completed and then to have sprung it on the committee, the Senate, and the country, I thought that because of the seriousness of the allegations, it would also have been wrong not to have taken a pause and to have heard from Dr. Ford and Judge Kavanaugh, and we did. Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY, of the Judiciary Committee, was accused by someone on my side of the aisle of bending over backward when he should have pushed ahead, but he reopened the process and allowed the painful ordeal to play out as, I think, we were compelled to do—painful for Dr. Ford, painful for Brett Kavanaugh, the Senate, and the country.

I believe sexual assault is a serious problem in our Nation, and many women and girls—survivors, victims—choose not to come forward, choose not to report it for understandable reasons. Therefore, I think we should take allegations seriously. We must take allegations of sexual assault very seriously, and I do. Dr. Ford deserved the opportunity to tell her story and be heard, and, of course, Judge Kavanaugh deserved the opportunity to defend himself. That is why I supported not only having the additional committee investigation and hearing but also of taking another week to have a supplemental FBI investigation after the normal Judiciary Committee process was completed. I watched that additional Judiciary Committee hearing, and I lis-

tened carefully to both Dr. Ford's and Judge Kavanaugh's testimony. I am sure many Americans did.

I have now been briefed on it and have read the supplemental FBI report, which arrived early this morning. I went to a secure room here in the Capitol. To do so, I went three times today to be sure I could be fully briefed on it and could read it. Again, my job, my obligation, is to assess the facts, and the facts before us are that no corroboration exists regarding the allegations. No evidence prepared before or in the supplemental FBI investigation corroborates the allegations—none.

Judge Kavanaugh, of course, has adamantly denied the allegations. His testimony is supported by multiple other statements. Simply put, based on the hearings, the Judiciary Committee's investigation, and the FBI's supplemental investigation, there is no evidence to support the serious allegations against Judge Kavanaugh. Of course, in his 25 years of public service, there had also been six previous FBI investigations.

In America, there is a presumption of innocence. When there is no evidence to corroborate a charge, there is a presumption of innocence that we must be very careful to pay heed to.

Just 1 day after Dr. Ford's allegations were made public, 65 women who knew Judge Kavanaugh in high school sent a letter to the Judiciary Committee in defense of his character. These 65 women put this letter together within a day's notice.

The letter stated:

Through the more than 35 years we have known him, Brett has stood out for his friendship, character, and integrity. In particular, he has always treated women with decency and respect. That was when he was in high school, and it has remained true to this day.

These are women who knew Brett Kavanaugh. They knew him in high school. Importantly, that is the Brett Kavanaugh I have known these past 15 to 20 years.

This confirmation debate could have and should have unfolded very differently. The process has become poisonous, and it is up to us in this Chamber to change it.

It is going to take a while for the Senate and the country to heal from this ugly ordeal, but for now let me make a modest suggestion. Let's step back from the brink. Let's listen to each other. Let's argue passionately, but let's lower the volume. Let's treat disagreements like disagreements, not as proof that our opponents are bad people. Let's see if we can glorify quiet cooperation—at least every once in a while—instead of loud confrontation.

Some may say this is trite or naive, but, my colleagues, we have crossed all these lines in recent weeks. For the state of this institution and for the country, we have to step back from the brink, and we have to do better.

The way this process unfolded risks candidates with the kinds of qualifica-

tions and character we all want deciding to think twice before entering public service. If the new normal is eleventh-hour accusations, toxic rhetoric like calling a candidate "evil" and those who support him "complicit in evil" and guilt without any corroborating evidence, who would choose to go through that? How many good public servants have we already possibly turned away by this display? How many more will we turn away if we let uncorroborated allegations tarnish the career of a person who has dedicated 25 of the past 28 years to public service and who has done so with honor, again based on the testimony of so many people across the spectrum, men and women?

These are questions the Senate is going to have to grapple with for possibly years to come, but right now I want to focus on something that hasn't gotten as much attention in the last couple of weeks, and that is what is known.

I know Judge Kavanaugh as someone with a deserved reputation as a fair, smart, and independent judge. I know him as someone who is universally praised by his colleagues for his work ethic, his intelligence, and his integrity. I know him as someone who respects everyone and someone whose first introduction to law came from listening to his mom practicing closing arguments at the dinner table. Perhaps most importantly—most importantly—I know him as someone who has the ability to listen. It is something we need more of in this country and on the Court during turbulent times.

In following facts, as I am obligated to do, I will support this nomination, and I will be proud to vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh as the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3532

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I understand, there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3532) to authorize the United States Postal Service to provide certain non-postal property, products, and services on behalf of State, local, and tribal governments.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. PORTMAN. I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8:22 p.m., adjourned until Friday, October 5, 2018, at 9:30 a.m.